

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 30, 2012

Agenda Item: Draft Statewide Fisheries Management Plan

Division: Fish and Wildlife

Action Needed: Decision to proceed with public involvement

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 90 minutes

Background

The FWP Fish and Wildlife Division is proposing a Draft Statewide Fisheries Management Plan and seeking the Commission's permission to proceed with public involvement (FWP will also conduct an Environmental Analysis on the draft plan and solicit public comments). The plan identifies the overarching goals and direction for core fisheries programs, including fish management, aquatic habitat, fishing access and angling opportunities. At a watershed scale, the plan establishes the management direction for each waterbody under FWP authority, the management objectives for the fish found in the waterbody, and any special considerations or management issues that apply. The plan also provides the public with an overview on the laws, rules and policies that affect fisheries management and the framework for decision-making and project priority setting. The Final Plan will provide guidance to FWP and the FWP Commission in the development of future policies and regulations.

Public Involvement Process and Results

Public involvement is critical to the success of the plan. FWP is prepared to solicit public comments from September 10 through October 12 (33 days), with public meetings to occur in each region and Helena. FWP will also present the plan to the Anglers Forum, which consists of representatives from various angling and conservation groups. The public involvement process will also include press releases and a web page dedicated to the planning process. FWP anticipates proposing a Final Plan to the Commission at its December, 2012 meeting.

Alternatives and Analysis

FWP could continue without a statewide fish management plan. This alternative is not preferred. A statewide plan offers the public a better opportunity to affect, understand, and support the management direction and priorities for fisheries management.

Agency Recommendation and Rationale

FWP recommends that the Commission approve the Department's request to begin soliciting public comments on the draft plan. The statewide plan will help FWP to effectively manage Montana's fisheries and enhance public understanding and support for these efforts.

Proposed Motion

"I move that that the FWP Commission approve the Department's request to begin soliciting public comments on the draft statewide fisheries management plan and report back with its findings and a final recommendation."